

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 138217
ORIGIN ARA-14

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P 312252Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUM, OAS

SUBJECT: VIII OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY: "SPECIAL INVITEE"
STATUS FOR AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND OTHER
ORGANIZATIONS

1. ARTICLE 10 OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RULES OF PROCEDURE
PERMITS OAS PERMANENT COUNCIL TO INVITE NON-GOVERNMENTAL
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ATTEND GA AS "SPECIAL
INVITEES". TO DATE SIX PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, HAVE REQUESTED PERMISSION TO
ATTEND VIII GA. PERMANENT COUNCIL REFERRED THESE REQUESTS
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PAGE 02 STATE 138217

TO COMMITTEE ON MEETINGS AND ORGANIZATIONS, WHERE SOUTHERN
CONE COUNTRIES HAVE STALLED ISSUANCE OF INVITATIONS BY
RAISING LEGAL QUESTIONS ABOUT SPECIAL INVITEE STATUS AND
ASKING FOR MORE INFORMATION ON REQUESTING ORGANIZATIONS,
EVEN SUCH WELL-KNOWN ENTITIES AS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL,
WINNER OF NOBEL PEACE PRIZE. WHEN QUESTION OF THREE
REQUESTS, INCLUDING THAT OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, CAME

TO VOTE IN COMMITTEE MAY 30, A MAJORITY OF DELEGATIONS PRESENT DID NOT VOTE TO EXTEND INVITATIONS, THUS SENDING QUESTION TO PERMANENT COUNCIL. DELEGATIONS FROM ADDRESSEE HOST GOVERNMENTS WERE EITHER ABSENT (TEGUCIGALPA, PORT AU PRINCE) OR ABSTAINED (LA PAZ, GUATEMALA).

2. IN US VIEW, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT PERMANENT COUNCIL EXTEND INVITATION TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TO ATTEND GA AS SPECIAL INVITEE. AMNESTY'S WORLD PRESTIGE AND INTEGRITY ARE INDISPUTABLE. A DECISION NOT TO ACCEDE TO ITS REQUEST FOR SPECIAL INVITEE STATUS WOULD CAST DOUBT ON COMMITMENT OF OAS TO HUMAN RIGHTS. ALSO, QUESTION WOULD PROBABLY BE RAISED AT GA, INTRODUCING DIVISIVE SIDE ISSUE INTO DISCUSSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

3. IN ORDER ASSURE MAJORITY IN FAVOR OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AT JUNE 7 MEETING OF PERMANENT COUNCIL, USOAS IS COOPERATING WITH VENEZUELAN AND PANAMANIAN DELS TO LOBBY FOR YES VOTES. UNLESS SERIOUS OBJECTION PERCEIVED, ADDRESSEE POSTS ARE REQUESTED TO URGE HOST GOVERNMENTS TO INSTRUCT THEIR OAS REPRESENTATIVE TO VOTE IN FAVOR OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REQUEST WHEN ISSUE IS RAISED AT JUNE 7 PERMANENT COUNCIL MEETING. PLEASE ADVISE REACTIONS.

4. EXTENSION OF INVITATIONS TO OTHER REQUESTING ORGANIZATIONS, WHILE DESIRABLE IN US VIEW, IS NOT AS ESSENTIAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 STATE 138217

AS IN CASE OF AI. THESE ORGANIZATIONS ARE: NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST, COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAS, INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS AND AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE. IN CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS, LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS MAY BE RAISED CONCERNING INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER OF ORGANIZATION AND/OR TIMELINESS OF REQUEST.

5. FOR GUATEMALA. FYI. OAS DEPSEC GEN JORGE LUIS ZELAYA TOLD US ALTERNATE REP TRAGEN THAT VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT VILLAGRAN SAID HE WOULD FAVOR APPROVING AMNESTY'S REQUEST. VILLAGRAN INDICATED THAT FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA ORANTES REMAINS IN CHARGE OF GUATEMALAN FOREIGN POLICY UNTIL ELECTION DAY AND THAT MOLINA IS SENSITIVE TO SUGGESTIONS BY INCOMING ADMINISTRATION. HENCE, SUGGEST EMBASSY NOT REFER TO VILLAGRAN'S COMMENT ALTHOUGH WE UNDERSTAND VILLAGRAN IS INDEPENDENTLY CONTACTING MOLINA. END FYI. CHRISTOPHER

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